2: Batchelor M-5 (1877-1924)1927
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CHAPTER XXIV

THE BIRTH TREE AND CUSTOMS AT CHILDBIRTH

Among this people the willow tree is of great importance, for, as has already been pointed out, the backbone of original man is said to have been formed out of it. The life of man is supposed to have its seat in it rather than in the blood, as many other races believe. One is not surprised, therefore, to find that this tree is much used in making certain kinds of fetishes and regarded as a sort of individual "birth tree." Among the Aryan peoples, Roman and Teuton, it was believed that a person's fate and life were mystically involved with that of his "birth tree," i.e. a tree planted at his birth; and that his life depended on and terminated with that of the tree, the man growing or withering as his tree grew or withered. Something of the same idea is involved in a certain willow fetish which is made for an Ainu child when born.

As soon as a child has come into the world, the father, or, as a rule, the grandfather, will go to the bank of a river, where he will seat himself upon the ground and pray to his gods. That done, he will cut a nice green stick of willow about a foot in length. This he will reverently bring home and, sitting down by the hearth, whittle into a fetish. When finished, he will worship it devoutly, offer prayers to the Goddess of Fire, and then, carefully taking it in both hands, carry it to the sleeping place and set it up there as the tutelary god of the new baby.

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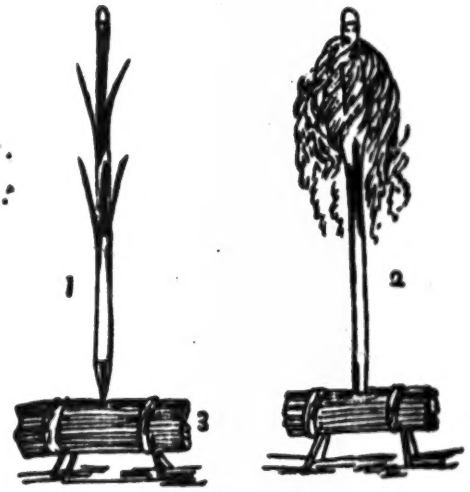

THE WILLOW TOTEM

1. is the stem itself.
2. is the stem with the shavings tied round it.
3. is the pillow in which it is set.

852 782 After this has been set up, a prayer is said, which indubitably shows that this birth fetish is looked upon as the angel of the child's growth.

"As the backbone of man was originally made of willow wood, the men should hasten to make fetishes of this tree as soon as a child has been born. After it has been properly pilled they should address it thus:

'As thou, fetish, art a god, we worship before thee. When God formed man in the beginning He made his spine out of willow wood. We therefore call upon thee, O willow fetish, to watch over this child while he is growing up. Guard him and give him strength, together with a long life.'

"After this prayer has been said, the fetish should be reverently stuck in its pillow seat and placed by the bedside. When the child has grown up, he should frequently procure saké or millet beer and worship this, his guardian god."

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"Oh no," said he, "not that; but as he has a new baby, he has to be very quiet for a time." "Well," I said, "that seems to me to be very funny. He ought really to be looking very spry and happy, but there he is as far down in the doldrums as it is possible for him to be. Why should he pretend to be ill?" 846

Said Penri, "Ah, you don't understand. He is following an old custom."

"What custom is it?" I asked, and he replied,

"As soon as it is definitely known that a baby is to be born, the prospective mother calls her husband and parents, tells them the happy news, and then makes them a feast. This ceremony is called *kon-e-inono-itak*, i.e. "prayer for the stomach." During the feast the two men make many fetishes of willow and offer them to the goddess of fire with much prayer, especially requesting that all may go on well. Then, when the birth has taken place, the father is sometimes called upon to stay at home wrapped up by the fire, as you saw, or to leave the house and go to stay with some friends for a time and keep very quiet as though he were ill for six days. He must stay in the hut all the time and rest by the fireside. This is called *yaimunke*, i.e. 'taking good care of oneself.'" And surely that is what I saw my friend doing, only he looked very miserable over it. 842 846 844 846

"When a child is six days old," said the chief, "there is a function held called *po-e-inonne-itak*, i.e. "prayer for the child." On this occasion a small feast is prepared, of which the father, mother and grandparents only partake. At this time many fetishes are made and presented to the west-end doorway, one of whose special provinces it appears to be to watch over the birth and early years of children." I should have remarked above that during child-birth no man soever may be rightly allowed to come into or go out of a house by the west doorway. When necessary to go in or out, and should there be no door in the south wall, 852 [784 844]

2: Batchelor M-5 (1877-1924) 1927
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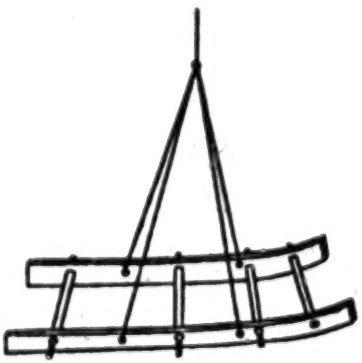
the sacred east end window must be broken down and an entrance made there.

Continuing, the Chief said, "On the morning of the seventh day the man may *shotki chupu*, i.e. "fold up the bed." On this day he returns to his own home. Yet even here he must abide for another six days. During the first period of six days he must not drink *sake* or worship the gods. This is out of special reverence to the supreme powers. And during the last six days he must not *ikutasa*, i.e. "have friends in for a drunken carouse"; nor must he go fishing or hunting. But he may eat, drink, worship, make fetishes and be very merry quietly by himself just as he pleases."



AN AINU CRADLE

"But," said I, "why should the Ainu men be so particular about resting when a child is born. I should have thought that it was the wife who needed the rest." I then gathered from him that his people suppose the body and animal life of their children to be in great measure, if not exclusively, from their mothers, while the life of the spirit and intellect comes from their fathers. The life of the body is imparted by the mother gradually from the time of conception until

women. These skills were conceived to be biologically innate rather than learned.

(3) "*Woman's treasure.*" Woman's treasure was passed from mother to eldest daughter. Some informants maintain that, though the eldest daughter was the custodian of the treasure, her sisters had legitimate access to it. In the absence of a daughter, the wife of the eldest son inherited the treasure. The family, rather than the matrilineal group, was the unit of inheritance as it was for "man's treasure."

(4) *Marriage.* Marriage usually took place within the village. Intervillage marriage tended to be avoided because of expense; it involved bride exchange: a girl of the village to which the new bride came had to be sent to the bride's village. The girl thus given in exchange did not necessarily marry into the bride's family, but she did have to marry a man of the latter's village. This practice of bride exchange tended to concentrate the women of a matrilineal group and to perpetuate its descent line in the same village. Compared with men of the same patrilineal group, however, women belonging to the same descent group were more dispersed. Rules of exogamy will be discussed below in connection with the matrilineage.

(5) *Cooperation among matrikin.* Handling of the dead at funerals was the task of matrilineally related women. According to one informant, a woman's body was attended to by her matrikin in the following order of preference: her mother, her mother's sisters, her own sisters, and her other matrikin.[6] In illness, a sick Ainu woman preferred to be nursed by her matrikin, and a sick Ainu man by his mother's matrikin. The birth of the first child took place in the mother's natal home; later births in her husband's home. While it was desirable for a woman to have her matrikin serve as midwives, this was not necessary; at childbirth the assistance of many women was required. These assistants included not only the pregnant woman's matrikin but also her father's female relatives, if the childbirth took place in her natal home; if it took place in her husband's home, the husband's female relatives helped. On the seventeenth day following birth a ceremony called *kamui ko yayattasa* ("thanksgiving to gods") was performed by the mother's male consanguines, attended by blood relatives, of both sexes, of her mother's father and of her husband. A woman was not allowed to officiate at a thanksgiving ceremony but had to depend on a male relative—most often either a brother or a son of one of her matrikin or else one of her father's patrikin.

(6) *Ancestor worship* (*shinnurappa*). When a husband worshipped his ancestors, his wife also participated in the ceremony. At the same time, she worshipped her own matrilineal ancestresses and her father's ancestors. Generally speaking, she placed the greatest emphasis on the worship of her matrilineal ancestresses. A man, however, worshipped his patrilineal ancestors exclusively. Noteworthy in this connection is the Ainu conception of the afterworld. It appears that women were thought to join their dead matrikin and men their dead patrikin. If this was actually the belief, the distinc-

6: Sugiura & Befu E-4, 5 (1951) 1962
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tion between the patrilineal and matrilineal groups was carried even into the after life, and the belief must have served as a "social charter" in Malinowski's sense.

Relationships Between the Sexes

Although in Ainu society the two sexes were segregated into mutually exclusive descent groups, men and women obviously could not and did not remain separate. There were many areas of social life, aside from the daily management of household tasks, in which mutual cooperation between the sexes was necessary. Some of these have already been discussed. For example, at childbirth, a woman relied, not only on her own matrikin, but also on her father's and husband's female blood relatives. At the thanksgiving ceremony after childbirth and in the worship of ancestors, women, who were not permitted to officiate at religious affairs, had to depend on their male relatives. Finally, with the dissolution of a marriage, whether owing to the death of the husband or to divorce, a wife usually went to live with her mother's brother or her own brother. A man, on the other hand, was dependent on his female relatives in illness and also at death. We are not certain whether these relationships between the sexes were purely individual, whether they were between a patrilineal group and a matrilineal group as expressed through their individual members, or whether they were between an individual and a descent group of the opposite sex.

The Problem of Matrilineages

Ainu patrilineal and matrilineal groups differ from typical unilineal descent groups in their exclusion of one or the other sex. The question arises whether the Ainu may not also have had unilineal descent groups of the ordinary type, i.e., including unilineally related individuals of both sexes. The existence of matrilineages is suggested by the Ainu marriage rules and also by aboriginal designations.

Marriage was prohibited, first of all, between father and daughter, foster father and foster daughter, mother and son, and foster mother and foster son. It was also forbidden between brother and sister. A nephew could marry his paternal but not his maternal aunt, and a niece could marry her paternal but not her maternal uncle. As previously noted, marriage was permitted with any cousin except a matrilineal parallel cousin. In other words, the individuals with whom marriage was prohibited included a male Ego's mother and her matrikin and a female Ego's own and her matrikin's sons and brothers. Put more simply, a woman might not marry (in addition to her father) the son or brother of any woman with whom she shared the same type of belt. These men are obviously the very ones who in an ordinary lineage system would constitute the male members of a matrilineage.

/765 cont./

844 remedy for all severe pains. If, despite all this, birth still does
798 not ensue, another sacrifice is made to the goddess of fire by
782 the elders of the house. A small inau is placed in the middle
789 of the hearth amidst burning logs, and as it is gradually con-
[955] sumed by the flames, an old man sitting on a little mat in front of the fire whispers a soft prayer improvised especially for the occasion. If the glowing stick falls over in the direction of the
[987] praying man, this is regarded as an indication that the prayer has been heard and that the woman will soon be relieved of her pains.

844 On the day of birth a husband usually does not work, but not because of some superstitious regulation; rather, he does it from sympathy and sorrow for his wife's suffering. He is also highly interested to see whether his ancestors presented him with a son or a daughter. He asks the midwife about this, and she answers laconically with ochkajko (man) or machneku (woman).
[842] I should mention, however, that the Ainu by no means have a special preference for offspring of a certain sex. I have, it is true, heard repeatedly that a father wished for a boy, yet it never occurred, to my knowledge, that one of the parents or of the relatives expressed himself with disgust or anger at the birth
846 of a girl. If the husband of the woman in childbed has an urgent business affair of some sort which cannot be put off under any circumstances, he may leave his wife and the newborn baby as early as the following day after the birth, but only, of course, if the health of both mother and child is satisfactory and there is no more danger to be feared.

846 /766/ On the first day of joy for the parents the husband
574 takes part in the festival arranged in honor of the birth. Most
● 852 of all, they throw wild garlic (Alium victoriale) into the fire.
[824] This plant is considered the favorite food of the gods and the
776 Ainu believe that they can force the gods to take part in the
[782] festival by throwing it into the fire. Rice is also cooked with
[262] garlic, and made into a very rare and tasty dish. All neighbors
[758] are invited to the feast. These come quietly and are careful

/766 cont./

846 not to disturb the rest which the sick woman so badly requires.
852 They eat the prepared dishes and take part in the jubilation of
574 the household.
[1158]

The Woman after Parturition.

846 The sick woman is served food of the best and most digest-
262 ible sort possible. She is given rice and dried or fried fish with seal oil, but no juicy berries and no foods at all that are not readily digestible. Thus I once witnessed a woman in childbed refusing to eat rye-bread although she liked to eat it ordinarily. A woman in this stage is also not permitted to eat very cold foods, and everything is served to her at a tepid temperature.

846 For five days she is not allowed to sew, cook or do any other work. If she is weak her convalescence will last even longer. Under normal conditions a woman in childbed will get up on the sixth or seventh day and gradually go back to her usual tasks.

844 The Ainu pay special attention to the childbed. For instance,
757 massage is continued even after delivery. To alleviate the pain it is supposed to be advisable to wrap into the chips with
[825] which the rubbing is to be done a piece of the dried uterus of
[823] a bear or the tooth of an iron saw. They also massage repeatedly with moistened sea herb. Ainu women generally suffer pains after birth in the sacral region and to remove they they use various remedies. Among others they prepare poultices for the sick woman of sand heated at the fire and then put into a little
[824] bag. Also warmed chips of elder (Sambucus) are laid between the woman's feet, or warm stones wrapped in chips are laid on her abdomen. Instead of the chips they sometimes also use grass.

[514] If the patient's excretions are too violent and painful an
[824] infusion of wild grass (arakoikina) is prepared and taken by the woman. They also boil a certain grass, simosineka (Lamium) and a certain tall plant called hopenukina, and with this warm tea they wash the body of the woman in childbed. Sometimes she will also drink an infusion of a certain plant called okina.
[823] A strongly recommended cure for the woman lying-in is that she carry during the first four to five days heavy coral stones of